

Psalms 111:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.

Analysis

This verse presents the foundational principle for all wisdom: 'The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.' 'Fear' (Hebrew 'yirah') encompasses reverence, awe, worship, and recognition of God's authority. It's not servile terror but proper respect for God's character. 'Beginning' (reshit) can mean first in time, importance, or both - the fear of the LORD is both the starting point and the foundational principle of wisdom. Without proper relationship to God, all learning remains folly. The second clause expands: 'a good understanding have all they that do his commandments.' 'Good understanding' (sekel tov) means sound judgment, skill in living. Wisdom isn't merely theoretical knowledge but practical application - demonstrated through keeping God's commandments. Obedience validates understanding. The final phrase returns to worship: 'his praise endureth for ever.' Genuine wisdom results in perpetual praise. This creates a complete cycle: fearing God leads to wisdom, wisdom manifests in obedience, and obedience produces eternal praise.

Historical Context

This verse echoes Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10, establishing a consistent wisdom tradition in Israel. Unlike surrounding ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature which focused on pragmatic success, Hebrew wisdom rooted all understanding in relationship with YHWH. The 'fear of the LORD' was Israel's distinctive contribution to wisdom literature. In Solomon's time, Israel's wisdom tradition

flourished, drawing seekers from other nations (1 Kings 4:29-34). However, even Solomon's wisdom proved insufficient when he abandoned the fear of the LORD (1 Kings 11). Post-exilic Judaism increasingly emphasized Torah study as the path of wisdom, making the connection between 'doing his commandments' and 'good understanding' explicit. The verse would be particularly meaningful to those who experienced exile's consequences of abandoning God's commands. In the New Testament, Christ becomes the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24), and the fear of the Lord remains essential (2 Corinthians 7:1, Ephesians 5:21). The eternal nature of God's praise reflects that wisdom rooted in God has eternal value, unlike earthly wisdom that perishes.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How is 'fear of the LORD' both the beginning and foundation of all genuine wisdom?
2. What is the relationship between knowing God's commandments and doing them in the development of wisdom?
3. Why is wisdom impossible to attain apart from proper reverence for God?
4. How does this verse challenge modern education that separates knowledge from morality and God?
5. In what ways should the eternal nature of God's praise shape our priorities and pursuits?

Interlinear Text

לְכֹל	טוֹב	שֶׁכָּל	יְהוָה	יִרְאַת	חֲכָמָה	הֵן	רֵאשִׁית
	a good	understanding	of the LORD	The fear	of wisdom	is the beginning	
	H2896	H7922	H3068	H3374	H2451	H7225	
לְעֹד:	עִמָּךְ	תְּהִלָּתוֹ	וְכָל	עֲשִׂיהֶם			
for ever	endureth	his commands his praise	have all they that do				
H5703	H5975	H8416	H6213				

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 1:7 (References Lord): The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 9:10 (References Lord): The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

Job 28:28 (References Lord): And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 (Word): Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

Proverbs 3:4 (Good): So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

Matthew 25:21 (Good): His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

Matthew 25:23 (Good): His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

John 5:44 (Parallel theme): How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?

2 Corinthians 4:17 (Parallel theme): For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

Deuteronomy 4:6 (Parallel theme): Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

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